ANNUAL REPORT of the Medical Officer of Health to the

Barton Regis Rural District Council.

JANUARY 1898.

The Rural Sanitary District of Barton Regis remains as it was unaffected by the alterations in the boundaries of the City of Bristol and now constitutes one of the districts immediately abutting on that of the City in which position it will remain probably without alteration for the next generation. We are therefore in a position now to make such Sanitary arrangements as seem necessary without fear of disturbance or derangement.

It is not within my province to discuss the situation for the new Workhouse which will be necessary for the parishes which should constitute the New Union but I venture to express an opinion that it will be a great mistake to unite either of the parishes now remaining in Barton Regis with Mangotsfield, Warmley or any of those districts which are in a state of rapid transition from rural to suburban localities. The parishes now remaining in Barton Regis Union are essentially rural - in great measure agricultural and in no way affected by the manufacturing industries which dominate the population of the districts to which I allude.

Water Supply.

In last year's report I mentioned that Stoke Gifford was the only parish in our district unprovided with Company's water. Since then the West Gloster Company has laid mains in that part of the parish in which Stoke Park (the Duke of Beaufort's) is situated and have continued them towards Filton which is already supplied by the Bristol Company. The acquisition of pure water with a practically

unlimited supply is too tempting a boon to be lightly passed by - and from having had difficulty when the West Gloucester Company was first started in inducing the rural public to accept the boon, even when their existing supply was impure or insufficient, we now find that the want of Company's water is regarded as a grievance and serious detriment to any residential property.

But in the case of Filton, the West Gloucester Water Company has only itself to blame, for many years I reported to you over and over again the scarcity of water at Filton - sometimes amounting to a water famine, so that your Council was much exercised in finding means of meeting the difficulty. The West Gloucester Company being unable or unwilling to extend its mains so far, you very naturally turned to the Bristol Company who having no legal power to enter the parish with its mains at first allowed Filton to be helped by water carts from Horfield until the expiration of the period granted the West Gloucester Company by their Act allowed the Bristol Company to lay down pipes and supply the village. Such being the case the West Gloucester Company ought not now to interfere with the Bristol Company who came to the rescue of Filton in its distress.

I am able to report that every part of our Sanitary district is now well supplied with water.

Sewerage.

The Sewerage of Westbury has caused and is causing considerable anxiety. There are two systems in existence there - Westbury proper with the old Village drains by a High and Low level into the Canford Sewage Farm while a separate Sewer conveys the refuse of Stoke Bishop and Sneyd Park directly to the River Avon at Sea Mills. The Canford Farm never was a suitable place for sewage disposal, being too near the Village and the soil of a character unfit for

the purpose. These objections which existed 20 years ago when the place was first started as a sewage Farm are emphasised by lapse of time - the soil having become saturated with Sewage refuses to purify more, so that what is now carried to it in great measure passes away unpurified polluting the atmosphere and contaminating the river which receives the effluent. Building having increased, the amount of sewage reaching the Farm is more than the acreage was estimated to deal with and the place therefore, if it were efficient is now too small. This increase in building will receive great stimulus by the boundaries of Bristol being settled and Westbury left in the County, and building in the immediate vicinity of the Farm would increase still more if the polluted atmosphere ceased to exist.

These objections to the Sewage Farm are universally recognized - the public anxiety is to decide what is the best substitute for it.

The plan proposed by your Surveyor and approved by the parochial Committee is to carry a sewer from Westbury to Sea Mills, there to unite with the existing Sneyd Park Sewer and discharge the sewage into the Avon which at that point is a fairly wide tidal river. A Local Government Board Enquiry under Inspector Meade King was held at Westbury in October to consider the application of your District Council for a loan for this purpose at which Bristol appeared in opposition, contending that passing sewage directly into the Avon would dangerously pollute the river and constitute a nuisance. No doubt theoretically it is a retrograde measure to pass crude sewage into a river such as the Avon, but as a matter of fact the whole City of Bristol which since its enlargement contains 300000 inhabitants, discharges all its crude sewage into the Avon at points much higher in its course and the effect upon the pollution of the water by the

addition of the sewage of 4000 people which is about the number of the whole inhabitants of Westbury would be scarcely appreciable - besides Bristol, Bath and other large Towns drain into the Avon and the time must come when this will have to cease and in common with the others, Westbury sewage will then have to be purified or cut off from the river, but until that time arrives no additional harm can be done to the Avon which is already little better than a common Sewer to the principal cities in its course. by passing into it near its mouth the small refuse of Westbury.

Housing of Working Classes.

The class of small houses in this district are gradually but rapidly improving. Your Inspector does not allow anything to pass unnoticed - his monthly reports direct attention to defects in structure, convenience and repair, with the result that notice from you is generally enough to secure remedy. and I report generally that the houses of the working classes are much better now than they were 10 years ago.

In January I had to report that a house in Walker's Gain, Westbury, was in a condition unfit for habitation.

The three Cottages at Filton reported upon in May of last year as unfit for human habitation have caused us much trouble. I have frequently visited them and repeated my report - until in the spring of the year an order was obtained from the Magistrates in which we got the occupants out and the owner undertook to remedy them. Since then I have frequently visited them - a pretence has been made to remedy their defects but I have never yet been able to report them fit for human habitation and they remain untenanted.

In September I visited and reported to you that a house on the Batch at Shirehampton was from dampness and

structural defects unfit for human habitation. Notice was served upon the owner and in November I reported that the defects were remedied but that I could not say the house was fit for habitation.

Another Cottage at Stoke Bishop in which Diphtheria occurred in April I reported to you in September as still requiring remedy to make it safe for habitation. After some controversy with the Landlord, our requirements have been complied with and my condemnation withdrawn.

Isolation of Infectious Diseases.

The attack by Bristol on its surrounding neighbours being now concluded, and our respective boundaries settled for many years, it behoves us to consider (with a full determination to act) what means we are going to provide for the isolation and consequent control over the spread of infectious Fevers in our district, - as I have repeatedly said before, our best efforts are vain and the expense of Sanitary administration in great measure thrown away so long as we stop short of having a means of combatting epidemics by isolating the first subject. Our powers of artificially destroying the germs are limited - we can circumscribe their dissemination and counteract their influence, but we have no certain means of preventing their diffusion but the isolation of those who, having first contracted the disease, become the focus from which infection starts and pervades the locality.

I venture to repeat the views I have before expressed in reference to Isolation Homes.

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Just to be of service in a rural district, an Isolation Hose must not be far distant from the locality it has to serve.

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for which it is provided, and with this object must be managed with as little restriction and formality as is consistent with the end it has to meet.

If this is not so, friends will not allow their sick, and parents will not consent to their children being removed to it when occasion demands and the object for which it is provided will be frustrated.

Our district naturally divided itself into two portions which have very little direct connection and whose interests are not identical except that they both utilize Bristol as their Market Town. The one portion groups itself round Westbury as a centre, namely, Henbury, Shirehampton and Westbury, which includes Stoke Bishop and Sneyd Park - with a total acreage of 12,627 and a population of 9,150. The other takes Horfield as its leading point and includes with it Filton and Stoke Gifford, the acreage being 6.452 and the population 4,025.

10 Beds would be accommodation enough for the Westbury, and 5 Beds for the Filton area - with Hospitals should be under the general direction of the Medical Officer of Health but the nearest Medical practitioner should be the actual attendant; such an arrangement as this would not be costly but would give great relief to the Health Authorities of Bristol, a chance of grappling with the infectious fevers over which at present we have so little control.

Improvident Midwives.

In the spring of 1908 a great deal of serious sickness broke out in the parish of Westbury from the fact that [illegible] and scavengers' rubbish from Bristol accumulated in huge heaps to which they set fire to destroy what the tenants [illegible] from these heaps of decayed animal and vegetable matter while burning was most offensive and unquestionably injurious -

plaint.

In August I visited the Brick yard at Brentry Hill of which complaints were made. The situation of the Yard is close to the populous village of Westbury, and the configuration of the ground is such that the smoke from the chimney is bound to be an offence, but the owner promises to raise the chimney next Spring and by so doing to remove all cause of complaint.

Vital Statistics.

Births. The Births this year number 317 - Males 154. Females 163; - an increase on last year but considerably less than the average of the five preceding years, - the number last year being 286, equal to a rate of 21.6 per 1000 of the population while this year it is equal to a rate of 24.05 per 1000.

Deaths. The number of deaths is 155, or at a rate of 11.6 per 1000 of the population. This is a low rate and corresponds with the reports of sickness which have reached me during the year. The rate last year was 12.28 per 1000, the average of the three preceding years being 15.8 per 1000.

Infant Mortality.

The deaths of children under one year of age number 42, also a smaller number than usual. Last year it was 57, and the average of the three preceding years 49. 42 deaths under 1 year equals a rate of 132.4 per 1000 registered births.

Old Age. The deaths from old age (over 75) number 29, exactly the same number as last year which was considerably less than the average of the three preceding years.

Institution. The deaths in the Institution in the district have been particularly few. In the Workhouse there has only been one death of a pauper belonging to the parishes included in this district. In the Barracks at Norfield no death, and in the Hamkrook Village Hospital only one death.

Notifications. The number of infectious diseases notified in 1896 was 163. This year it is 82, namely Diphtheria 6. Membranous Croup 1. Erysipelas 14. Scarlatina 55. Typhoid 5 and puerperal fever 1. The number of deaths from Zymotics is 13, namely 5 from Scarlatina. 1 from Croup. 5 from Whooping Cough. 2 from Diarrhoea and 1 from Puerperal Fever,

Vital Statistics.

Births. The Births this year number 317 - Males 164. Females 153 - an increase on last year but considerably less than the average of the five preceding years, - the number last year being 280, equal to a rate of 21.8 per 1000 of the population while this year it is equal to a rate of 24.05 per 1000.

Deaths. The number of deaths is 155, or at a rate of 11.8 per 1000 of the population. This is a low rate and corresponds with the reports of sickness which have reached us during the year. The rate last year was 12.88 per 1000. the average of the three preceding years being 13.8 per 1000.

Infant Mortality.

The deaths of children under one year of age number 42, also a smaller number than usual. Last year it was 57, and the average of the three preceding years 60. 42 deaths under 1 year equals a rate of 132.4 per 1000 registered births.

Old Age. The deaths from old age (over 75) number 20, exactly the same number as last year which was considerably less than the average of the three preceding years.

Institution. The deaths in the Institution in the district have been particularly few. In the Workhouse there has only been one death of a pauper belonging to the parishes included in this district. In the Sanatoria at Norfield no death, and in the Hemlock Village Hospital only one death.

Notifications. The number of Infectious diseases notified in 1906 was 105. This year it is 82, namely Diphtheria 6. Membranous Croup 1. Erysipelas 14. Scarlatina 55. Typhoid 5 and puerperal fever 1. The number of deaths from Zymotics is 12, namely 3 from Scarlatina. 1 from Croup. 3 from Whooping Cough. 3 from Diarrhoea and 1 from Puerperal Fever.

giving a rate of 14.5 per cent of cases notified.

Of the 55 notifications of Scarlatina, 21 were from Westbury, 15 from Shirehampton, 9 from Henbury and 8 from Winterbourne.

EDWARD CROSSMAN.